



# Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life

## POINTS OF REFLECTION FOR A SYNODAL PATH WITH FAMILIES

"We have all been baptized in one Spirit to form one body. [...] Now you are the body of Christ and members of him, each for his part ". (1 Cor 12, 13 and 27)

Co-responsibility towards the common mission calls families to cooperate in the construction of the ecclesial fabric. We give them space and listen to them so that they can participate in the synodal journey, showing the "familiar face" of the Church. The Church, in fact, is a "family of families". (Fratelli tutti, 276)

This aid is intended to help Churches understand how to involve families in the synodal process, as families. The synodal journey does not ask us to reflect only on the needs and requirements of families, but on the contribution that the family itself can make to the synodal journey of the Church, as a pastoral subject.



*Translation from the original Italian by the Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life and the Family.*

*[https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/resources/synodality-family/IT\\_documento\\_uff\\_famiglia.pdf](https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/resources/synodality-family/IT_documento_uff_famiglia.pdf) (original document)*



### AN INTIMATE AND MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY

“The Church is God’s family in the world” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 25), and serves as leaven and as a kind of soul for human society (7) as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40).

- “In this way, the spouses are consecrated and **by means of a special grace** build up the Body of Christ and form a domestic church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11), so that the Church, in order fully to understand her mystery, looks to the Christian family, which manifests her in a real way (*Amoris Laetitia*, 67).
- The Second Vatican Council **renewed the image of the family as a “domestic Church”** (*Lumen gentium*, 11), which was present in the first centuries of Christianity (cf. St. John Chrysostom).
- **The family is at the intersection between the Church and the world** and has the task of “domesticating” the world, to “tame the world” with the power of love (*Amoris laetitia*, 183).



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- In what ways can our particular Church **look to the family to understand herself more fully**, to understand the mystery of the Church?
- What aspects of synodality do families reflect in a particular way? **What can family life teach us** about how to live synodality in our community?
- How can the Church **help families to be aware of their being** “leaven in the transformation of society”?



## SEEING THE SYNODAL CHURCH AS A FAMILY

- **Communion in the Church** finds an eloquent expression in the **unity of the family**. The families are living icons of the Trinity, in which the communion of the Church finds its own deep roots: **“The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.”** (*Amoris laetitia*, 11).
- Building up the Church by looking at the family opens the Church to **new ways of living communion, participation and mission**. **“The family is the way of the Church”** (*Gratissimam sane*, 2).
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## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- The family is a model of synodality. **What can the Church learn from the family?**
  - How does the family know how to **discern** in its daily life?
  - How do you **listen** to each other? or how do the various members of the family know how to **welcome** each other?
  - How can charity enter into ecclesial discernment, as it does in family life?
  - How do parents, children, siblings and relatives try to **love each other with their fragility**, their vulnerability, conflicts and different points of view?
- The specific mission of each family is to pour out into the world the love of God. This leads to building communion with other families and to welcoming each person as a son and brother. How can our Christian communities **live fraternity in the wider human family?**



## THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN THE SYNODAL CHURCH

- The family is an **active subject of the mission of the Church and synodality** (*Amoris laetitia*, 200).
- “The family is constituted [...] as the **subject of pastoral action through the explicit proclamation of the Gospel** and the inheritance of **many forms of witness**: solidarity towards the poor, openness to the diversity of people, the custody of creation, moral and material solidarity towards other families, especially towards the most needy, commitment to the promotion of the common good also through the transformation of unjust social structures, starting from the territory in which it lives, practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy” (*Amoris laetitia*, 290).
- “The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church” (*Amoris laetitia*, 88). It is therefore by **making the Kerygma resound in every family** that “family ministry will be able to help families discover that they are at the same time domestic Churches and an evangelizing leaven in society” (*Amoris laetitia*, 290).



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **What role can the family play in the process of building a more synodal Church?** as Church? And with the world?
- Families are a key point of communion in the Church - on the one hand, **within themselves** and on the other hand, beyond themselves in the wider community?
  - How do you experience communion within the family?
  - How do families contribute to building communion in the Church?
  - How can you give them more room for that?
- **Are families heard within the Church?** How can they be heard in this synodal process?
- How can this synodal process help us to better understand, promote and to strengthen **the mission of the family within the Church and in the world**, " that serves as leaven and as a kind of soul for human society?" (*Amoris Laetitia*, 290)
- How can **families** be **protagonists** in our local Churches?
- How can the family help the Church to get closer to those on the periferies? How can the Church reach out to families on the periferies?



#### IN SUMMARY:

For a **"walking together"** with families:

1. Discern how **the Spirit calls families, and not just individuals**, to be vehicles of fraternity in the synodal journey.
2. **Offer spouses and families the opportunity to express themselves and to be heard by** inviting them to a participative in an inclusive ecclesial process.
3. **Recognize and value the richness and variety of the gifts of families** in pastoral action, for the good of the community.
4. **Experiment with participative ways for families** to show and exercise their ecclesial responsibility, trying to do away with prejudices and ineffective practices to make space for new ways, which begin with the proposals of the families.
5. How can we consider the home as a place of pastoral care and proclamation?
6. Accept **the family as a credible entity**.
7. **Reestablish relationships of friendship and sharing between families**.
8. Promote the **formation of families of communion** within themselves and in the ecclesial community, putting into practice the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.
9. **Invite schools** to make the synodal journey available to families who may be far from the Church.